



Australian Bureau of Statistics

2914.0.55.002 - 2006 Census of Population and Housing: Media Releases and Fact Sheets, 2006

ARCHIVED ISSUE Released at 11:30 AM (CANBERRA TIME) 27/06/2007 First Issue

MEDIA FACT SHEET

June 27, 2007

Embargoed 9.30 am (AEST)

70/2007

More than one in five Australians born overseas: Census

- According to the 2006 Census, the proportion of the population reporting that they had been born overseas has remained unchanged since 1996 – 22% of the total population.
- The overseas-born population increased in number between 1996 and 2006 by 13%, from around 3.9 million to 4.4 million. The two largest overseas-born groups have continued to be those born in England (19% of all overseas-born) and New Zealand (9%). China overtook Italy as the third largest birthplace group (each country accounting for around 5% of all overseas-born).
- Around 2.1 million of Australia's overseas-born population were born in Europe. However, only 8% of these were recent arrivals (arrived in 2001 or later). Of the 1.2 million Australian residents born in Asia, 27% were recent arrivals.
- A number of Australia's recent arrivals had been born in countries recently affected by war and political unrest. Over 73% (or around 14,000) of Australian residents born in Sudan had arrived in 2001 or later. Similarly, a high proportion of the populations born in Zimbabwe (48% or 10,000 people), Afghanistan (45% or 7000), and Iraq (34% or 11,000) had arrived in 2001 or later.
- Since 1996, the groups which had increased the most in number were those born in New Zealand (by around 98,000), China (96,000), and India (70,000).
- Between 1996 and 2006, the size of the European-born population in Australia decreased. Since 1996, the biggest decreases in the number of Australian residents born in a particular country were for Italy (by around 39,000), Greece (17,000), and England (15,000).
- Western Australia had the highest proportion of its total population born overseas (27%) and Tasmania the lowest (11%).
- Sydney was the capital city with the highest proportion of its population born overseas – almost one-third. Hobart had the lowest proportion – 12% born overseas.

NB: The figures in this fact sheet exclude overseas visitors. Where an answer to a question has not been provided (i.e. not stated) these occurrences form a separate category in the data and therefore some percentages do not total to 100%.

Source: ABS 2006 Census.

Table 1.1 Top 15 Countries of Birth - 1996 Census - 2006 Census

Rank	Country of Birth	1996		Country of Birth	2006	
		Persons '000	Proportion of all overseas born %		Persons '000	Proportion of all overseas born %
1	England	872.1	22.3	England	856.9	19.4
2	New Zealand	291.4	7.5	New Zealand	389.5	8.8
3	Italy	238.2	6.1	China (excludes SARs and Taiwan Province)	206.6	4.7
4	Viet Nam	151.1	3.9	Italy	199.1	4.5
5	Scotland	146.3	3.7	Viet Nam	159.8	3.6
6	Greece	126.5	3.2	India	147.1	3.3
7	China (excl. Taiwan Province)	111.0	2.8	Scotland	130.2	2.9
8	Germany, Federal Republic of	110.3	2.8	Philippines	120.5	2.7
9	Philippines	92.9	2.4	Greece	110.0	2.5
10	Netherlands	87.9	2.2	Germany	106.5	2.4
11	India	77.6	2.0	South Africa	104.1	2.4
12	Malaysia	76.3	2.0	Malaysia	92.3	2.1
13	Lebanon	70.2	1.8	Netherlands	78.9	1.8
14	Hong Kong	68.4	1.8	Lebanon	74.9	1.7
15	Poland	65.1	1.7	Hong Kong (SAR of China)	71.8	1.6

Table 1.2 Australian-born/Overseas born split - 1996 Census - 2006 Census

	1996		2006	
	Persons '000	Proportion of total population %	Persons '000	Proportion of total population %
Australian born	13 227.8	74.5	14 072.9	70.9
Overseas born	3 908.2	22.0	4 416.0	22.2
Not Stated	616.8	3.5	1 366.3	6.9
Total	17 752.8	100.0	19 855.3	100.0

Table 2. 2006 Census: Top 15 countries of birth for recent arrivals, Australia

Country of birth	Persons who arrived between 2001-2006 '000	Proportion of total arrivals between 2001-2006 %
England	89.7	11.9
New Zealand	82.2	10.9
China (excludes SARs and Taiwan Province)	71.7	9.5
India	59.9	7.9
South Africa	32.7	4.3
Malaysia	23.2	3.1
Philippines	22.9	3.0
Korea, Republic of (South)	20.9	2.8
United States of America	17.9	2.4
Indonesia	16.9	2.2
Sudan	14.0	1.9
Singapore	13.7	1.8
Hong Kong (SAR of China)	13.4	1.8

Sri Lanka	13.1	1.7
Viet Nam	12.9	1.7

Table 3. 2006 Census: Australian and overseas-born(a)

State/Territory	Australian Born %	Overseas Born %
NSW	69.0	23.8
Vic	69.6	23.8
Qld	75.2	17.9
SA	74.0	20.3
WA	65.3	27.1
Tas	83.2	10.6
NT	76.8	13.8
ACT	73.0	21.7

(a) Figures do not add to 100% because of the proportion of people who did not state their country of birth.

Table 4. 2006 Census: Australian and overseas-born, capital cities(a)(b)

Capital City	Australian-born %	Overseas-born %
Sydney	60.4	31.7
Melbourne	64.2	28.9
Brisbane	72.0	21.7
Adelaide	70.7	23.7
Perth	61.5	31.3
Hobart	81.6	12.0
Darwin	70.7	18.3
Canberra	73.0	21.7

(a) Capital City Statistical Division.

(b) Figures do not add to 100% because of the proportion of people who did not state their country of birth.

This page last updated 27 June 2007

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